22. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:

an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

28. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 27, wherein

said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

30. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 28, wherein

said flanges project into the interior of said tubular duct, and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

31. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:

an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by both a bonding agent and a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

37. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 36, wherein said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

41. (Amended) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

Kindly add new claim 42 as follows.

42. (New) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.